

INTRODUCTION

The very name of Aranjuez is evocative; in much the same way as a reference to Chartres conjures up the image of its imposing cathedral in our mind's eye, the name of Aranjuez rouses historical, artistic and natural images, although it is difficult to be sure which comes first. Of course, Aranjuez was originally a gift of the Tàgus and the Jarama rivers, which, like the Nile in Egypt, make the lands they water fertile. It is equally certain, however, that on grafting Art onto Nature here, History sowed bountiful seed here. In this way, a balance was struck in the encounter, which has always been rather romantic in nature, between man and the local environment at Aranjuez that has produced a heavenly result owing to the munificence of its situation.

The fact is that Aranjuez is first and foremost, a gentle breeze that tempers the rigours of the seasons; of course, it is a pleasant landscape whose vistas are lit up or put out as though by a brush stroke; yes, it is a fertile land, watered twice over; but in the final instance, it is also the stage chosen by the gods to narrate the story of how a Royal Palace and its gardens were fashioned. And in this regard, Aranjuez is more than an evocation: it becomes a myth.

The prologue to the first act – before King Philip II appears on the scene – we are informed that these lands belonged to the military Order of Santiago, which appears to have come into possession of them at the time of the reconquest. But more definite information is available from the dying days of the Middle Ages, between 1387 and 1409, when the Order built its head-

quarters here, on the site of the present-day palace, using the location for recreational purposes. Similarly, the first engineering works were carried out on the Tàgus at this time, to ensure water was available to irrigate the crops, and there is even the possibility that a garden may have existed in the vicinity of the mansion, which would be the basis for the future Royal Residence of Aranjuez. The fact is that the Order's headquarters continued to exist, adjoining the part of the palace erected by Philip II, until the seventeenth century, when it was demolished as a result of Philip V's decision to finish the palace.

In broad lines, the next episode involves their Catholic Monarchs, whose policy of bringing the military orders under control led to Ferdinand the Catholic becoming the lifelong administrator of the orders, including the Order of Santiago, with the result that he came into possession of Aranjuez. The Catholic Monarchs certainly visited Aranjuez, staying in the Order's headquarters and enjoying the gardens which must have existed on the island immediately above the Tàgus from a very early date. This event is apparently remembered in the promenade planted with plane trees that bears the royal couple's name.

In the reign of Charles V, a papal bull granted by Adrian VI in 1523 permanently attached the property of the Order of Santiago to the Crown of Castile, with the result that from then on, Aranjuez was a crown possession. The Emperor visited the Order's old headquarters, and the place must have delighted him, because in 1534

he founded the Royal Forest and House of Aranjuez, and went on to buy several adjoining properties. In 1543, he ordered that several woods be planted: "It is ordered that loquats be planted in Soto de Siruela among the hawthorns; in Orzagal, Matalonguilla and Isla de la Huerta, willows, osiers, poplars and other suitable wild trees. I command that the mulberry trees in the Huerta be transplanted..."

If proof were needed that there was already something of a courtly atmosphere in Aranjuez in the days of Charles V, it exists in the form of the wedding held here in 1548 when the Emperor's daughter Maria married her cousin Maximilian, King of Bohemia, on which occasion a play by Ariosto was staged in the gardens.

This tradition makes King Philip II's love for Aranjuez more natural and easier to understand. He continued his father's work in increasing the extent of the Royal Forest and House of Aranjuez, beginning the huge civil engineering works with dams, canals and irrigation ditches to bring water to the fields and the woods, to

feed the fountains and, all in all, transformed the whole place into a paradise. For instance, water was taken from the Tagus on both left and right banks. The Azuda channel carried water towards Picotajo; the Embocador channel, fed from the dam of the same name, irrigated the left bank of the river; and water was also brought from the Ontígala lagoon to feed the fountains of the Jardín de la Isla. Two names are of particular importance in this marvellous feat of engineering: Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera, who were later also known for building the palace; but this was no more than a small part of Philip II's ambitious plan to make the River Tagus navigable as far as Toledo, or even as far as Lisbon itself – which meant connecting Aranjuez with the Atlantic. This part of the dream never became reality, but the palace complex with its gardens, bridges and avenues, as well as the roads arriving from Madrid, Toledo and Ocaña did become a beautiful reality, wonderfully drawn by Jean L'Hermite in the first view of Aranjuez that we know about, now carefully conserved in the Royal Library in Brussels.

PHILIP II'S PALACE

Having decided to build the new palace, King Philip II, after the changes in fortune described in the Introduction, turned to the new architect hired in Italy, Juan Bautista de Toledo. His name is linked, as is only fair, to the plans for the monastery of El Escorial, but it is no less true that before drawing a single line for this great enterprise Juan Bautista de Toledo had already been working on various commissions in Aranjuez since 1559, the year he arrived in Spain, and in particular on the palace, whose symbolical first stone was not laid until the first day of 1565, though, of course, after hearing mass. But by then all the preliminary trials, designs and models for the new palace had been completed, the building had been reconsidered on the ground and some of the foundations for the complex had even been laid. The first stone of the monastery of El Escorial had been laid, also symbolically, in the foundations under the refectory, in 1563, after all the work of preparing the site, so that Aranjuez and El Escorial are sisters of the same age and the same father, Juan Bautista de Toledo, and the result of the same royal wish, that of Philip II. All of this naturally explains the similarities between the Royal Palace of Aranjuez and the Casa del Rey at the monastery of El Escorial, as we shall see later.

At this point we must not forget that Juan Bautista de Toledo was called to Italy "so that from now on, for the rest of your life, you shall be our Architect and as such you must serve us in doing all the plans and models we command and in all our works, buildings and oth-

er matters that depend on the said profession of architect". In other words, Philip II had plans not only for El Escorial, but also for many other new royal works in Aranjuez or Madrid, as well as for finishing those begun in Toledo or El Pardo by his father Charles V. Of all these works, El Escorial is undoubtedly the most complex and the biggest and provides a backdrop to the few years of life the Fates allowed Juan Bautista de Toledo in our country, since, having arrived in Spain in 1559, the architect died in 1567.

Until that moment, Juan Bautista de Toledo never failed to attend to the work of the palace of Aranjuez, as the King was very keen to push ahead with the building, though meagre financial resources prevented his progressing with the work at the speed he would have liked. The architect's close biographical links with the Aranjuez project are revealed when we look at Juan Bautista de Toledo's activity in the final days of his life. We know, for example, that after visiting the works in February 1567, and with the King anxious to start the work of the palace chapel, the architect spent a few weeks in Aranjuez in March, already showing unmistakable signs of poor health.

Even so, this was a fruitful period for the work and for the project in general, as it left new plans, finalised details of the stonework and, somehow or other, details of finishes doubtless not resolved until then were specified and instructions on organising the work were given to his assistants, who at that moment were the surveyor Gaspar de Landeras, for the stonework, and Domingo

Sánchez and Gaspar Hernández, for the building work. Over these, the supervision of the work was entrusted to an Italian who was very close to Juan Bautista de Toledo, Gerónimo Gili. With these men and having given the relevant instructions, the architect returned to Madrid, but in May of that same year, 1567, he was informed of the need to replace the surveyor for the stonework, Gaspar de Landeras, who had died following a recurring fever. On 12 May Toledo chose a stonemason from Biscay to replace him and one week later the architect himself gave up the ghost in Madrid. In this way, we can honestly say that his concern for Aranjuez and its palace did indeed follow him to his deathbed, his stay that spring of 1567 having been providential for the works.

Replacing Juan Bautista at the head of the royal works was an even bigger problem, and in Aranjuez the King's confidence in Toledo's closest collaborator—Gerónimo Gili, mentioned above—meant that it was he who took over the work. His name had been suggested by Toledo himself in a memorandum addressed to the King which he left in readiness before he died and which is mentioned in the codicil signed the same day he died. It speaks of “the people who are sufficient [suitable] to serve H.M. in the works and buildings” the architect left under construction, where Gili's name appeared, as a colleague and close friend of Toledo, and not surprisingly one of the witnesses to the reading of the will.

However, Gili had considerable problems with the works surveyors, and though he gave new instructions and new guidelines following Juan Bautista de Toledo's model, Philip II gradually introduced Juan de Herrera into the work until he became fully and solely responsible for the palace of Aranjuez in 1575. However, once again, the scarcity of financial resources eventually forced the works to be stopped between 1584 and 1585, until in the eighteenth century they were resumed under the Bourbons.

Which was the palace planned by Toledo and built by Gili and Herrera for Philip II and what was it like? The answer is not a simple one, as for one thing the fire of

1734 in the Alcázar in Madrid destroyed the original plans and models which we know were kept there, and for another, the formidable work carried out in the eighteenth century concealed the older building by Philip II. Nevertheless, there are other sources available that give us a very good idea of Philip's palace, and I would go so far as to say that without them it is difficult to understand the story behind the palace we know and visit today.

Fortunately, the palace which Philip II left unfinished was used and reformed by the minor Austrias, especially Philip IV, giving rise to new plans and reports which are exquisite sources of information for us. Thus in 1626 the architect Juan Gómez de Mora copied Juan Bautista de Toledo's original plans, proposing new uses and distributions, as can be seen in the manuscript memorandum kept in the Vatican Library. In addition, a beautiful view of the palace of Aranjuez is kept in El Escorial which is undoubtedly based on the original wooden model. In it one can gauge the interest in this unfinished work later resumed, as the anonymous painter of this work, for some time attributed to Jusepe Leonardo, wrote the names of Philip II and Philip IV on the façade. The painter obviously had access to enough information to give a good idea of the three-dimensional development of the palace and its surroundings and shows, with photographic exactness, the start of the Casas de Oficios, the groves, orchards and gardens, old buildings at the back of the palace and the wooden bridge leading to the Jardín de la Isla, with its corresponding flower-beds and bowers. This well-known and often reproduced ideal view of the palace is complemented by the equally anonymous one kept in the Museo del Prado and dated 1630, where as well as the general layout of the site we can see the old headquarters of the Knights of Santiago, which stood next to the new building of Philip II's palace and which survived until the eighteenth century. From these views, which are contemporary to descriptions by Mora and other testimonies, such as the sketches for the *Journey of Cosimo de Medici*, we can safely deduce what was planned and what was built. The pa-

ternity of the idea must be attributed to Juan Bautista de Toledo, while it seems reasonable to recognise the modifications introduced by Herrera in the elevations, aspects on which those who have dealt with this delicate question have been divided.

Toledo had conceived of a palace with a broad façade and towers at the ends, behind which were arranged, around a central courtyard, the King's apartments, in the south, and the Queen's apartments, in the north, on two floors, the lower one for summer and the upper one for winter. The symmetry of the composition and the presence of accompanying private gardens as an integral part of the architectural project complete the similarity of Aranjuez with Philip II's palace at the monastery of El Escorial, as Fernando Chueca pointed out in his day.

What part of Philip II's project actually came to be built? Quantitatively, rather less than half, and qualitatively, the most important parts, that is the palatine chapel housed in the only tower that was built, to the south –the so-called chapel tower–, and the King's rooms opening on to the garden which bears his name. Of the façade, the only section completed is the one between this chapel tower, topped by a simple dome, and the first of the five axes planned for the central block, which was somewhat higher, with three levels instead of the two floors of the rest of the palace. White limestone for the bases of columns, for pilasters, cornices, the tops of walls, and for the surrounds of doors and windows, and walls in "Flanders-baked" brick, were to make the palace look like Herrera's work for the Alcázar in Toledo and, even more so, the Casa de Contratación in Seville. Stylistically speaking, the work is very restrained; the façades present disciplined orders with pilasters and stone panels covering the larger, naked stretches of brickwork, with the idea of arriving at a warm chromatic balance suited to the nature of the building, all far removed from the granitic harshness of El Escorial.

Curiously, all these aspects are still recognisable not only in the parts built under Philip II but in the remain-

der added in the eighteenth century. In fact, although the architects who continued the works two centuries later under a different dynasty were of French and Italian origin, the completion and enlargement of the palace, rather than clashing, appear to be a natural continuation of the original work and preserve the Philippine spirit, Juan Bautista de Toledo's basic idea and the character added by Juan de Herrera. We can still clearly make out the chapel tower, though the interior lost its religious use to accommodate living quarters in Sabatini's reforms. The white stone and the brickwork obviously still give the palace colour and texture in the same proportion as in the sixteenth century. The memory of Herrera, commonly associated with the spherical balls seen in El Escorial, also crown all the new work as it did the old one, and we could go on and on picking out everything the new builders took from the old work as their point of departure, in a masterly lesson on architecture which has withstood time and the possible personal prejudices of its makers and promoters.

Amongst the many elements preserved from the sixteenth-century palace is the Jardín del Rey, a walled, private garden on the south side of the palace, reached by the gateway which later, in the eighteenth century, was closed and the pieces turned to other uses. Even so, the garden is there, architecturally defined in the sixteenth century as part of Toledo's project, modified in the seventeenth century, later altered and then restored in our own day. The Jardín del Rey had its counterpart in the Jardín de la Reina, on the north side, which was never built, and the two were in turn connected, behind the palace, by a common garden, also walled, now the site of the so-called Jardín del Parterre, which has seen many changes until its present form, which arose during the nineteenth century.

But returning to the original project, the palace had walled, secret gardens laid out at its feet, with paths of ceramic tiles and fountains. We can get an idea of the fountains from the one forming the centrepiece to the Jardín del Rey, which praises the King's memory in the

excellent carving in jasper by Roque Solario. Niches with benches set into the enclosing wall offered a comforting rest in the best position in relation to the sun.

In the time of Philip II, the appearance of the garden was altered, its old ceramic paths were replaced with stone walkways and gravel flower-beds, recovered in the recent restoration work (1986). Philip IV himself, in 1622, sent an important collection of statues which were in the Alcázar in Madrid to decorate the *palacio* in Aranjuez, some of which were set up in the *Jardín del Rey*. To be precise, a dozen marble busts of Roman emperors –today in the *Casa del Labrador*– were distributed around these niches, presided over from the western side of the garden by a marble statue of Philip II signed by Pompeo Leoni in 1568. The following inscription was made on the pedestal: “The King Our Lord Don Philip II commanded that this garden be adorned with the statues it contains, under the governorship of Don Francisco de Brizuela. Year MDCXXIII”. Since then people have frequently referred to this garden as the garden of statues. On either side of the royal statue were placed the formidable marble reliefs, also by Leoni, of Charles V and the Empress Isabella of Portugal, which today can be seen in the Museo del Prado. This series of images clearly illustrated the imperial pedigree of the *Jardín del Rey*, in which Philip IV remembers his grandfather and great grandparents, without forgetting a reference to imperial power as embodied by the Roman Caesars.

The garden, connected with *El Parterre* since the eighteenth century, when the western wall was eliminated, has lost its earlier feel of a reserved and secret garden, though it is still possible to reconstruct the original appearance of this beautiful corner of Philip II's palace from accounts. The *Jardín de la Reina* never got beyond the planning stage, though it would, of course, have been a replica of the garden already described. Each of them would have had a doorway connecting it with the common garden, on the east side of the palace, which did begin to take shape, according to the view kept in the Museo del Prado and mentioned above. This canvas in our leading art gallery also shows the *Casa de Oficios* under construction, forming part of the palace complex. In fact, the *Casa de Oficios* is joined to the palace via a covered gallery at right angles which communicated the two buildings under the arcade or above the terrace of the two buildings, this covered solution being the lineal element joining the two. The *Casa de Oficios* was already included in Juan Bautista de Toledo's original project and was reconsidered by Juan de Herrera, who in 1584, at the King's request, made the “notes” or memorandum, with the conditions of work, submitting plans to Lucas de Escalante and Antonio de Segura, to begin work. The *Casa de Oficios* was to be located between the Plaza de Parejas, south of the *Palacio Real*, and the future Plaza de San Antonio, and was extended and lengthened in the eighteenth century with the addition of the *Casa de Caballeros*.

EL JARDÍN DE LA ISLA

Amongst the earliest undertakings by Juan Bautista de Toledo in Aranjuez is the design for the Jardín de la Isla, that is the garden to be formed to the north of the palace, on an island between two branches of the Tagus, or rather, between the Tagus and an artificial channel which formed part of a complex hydraulic plan for Aranjuez. We know that years before, under Charles V and while the future Philip II was still prince, the work of clearing and levelling the island had already begun, and that Gaspar de Vega and Alonso de Covarrubias, as architects linked to the royal estates, had even considered the layout of the paths in the future garden. But it is not until 1561 that things began to get moving with the arrival of trees from Flanders and France, whence a group of gardeners also came, amongst whom the names of Juan de Holvecq and Jerónimo de Algorta stand out.

In January 1653, a Royal Mandate commanded “the councils, magistrates, aldermen, knights, nobles, officers and gentlemen of Ocaña and the other towns up to four leagues from Aranjuez, for a period of two years from the announcement of this mandate, to send all the tradesmen, journeymen, labourers, carts and beasts existing in each of them to work in the Royal Works and gardens”, which gives an idea of the King’s firm determination to push ahead both with the construction of the palace and with the layout of the gardens, which called for considerable earthworks, ploughing up, digging of ditches, channelling of water from the Ontígola reservoir for irrigation and fountains, and many other works of infrastructure.

The documents leave no doubt as to the early authority of Juan Bautista de Toledo in relation to the origi-

nal layout of the garden, since in a letter written in 1561 by Pedro de Hoyo, secretary to Philip II, to the King, he gives an account of the problems arising from this and describes them in the following terms: “The Flemish gardener Your Majesty sent to Aranjuez was with me this morning. I showed and explained to him the plans for the Island Garden. He studied them closely and told me that he could lay it out according to them, though he feels that the flower-beds would be better square than elongated; I told Juan Bautista and he feels he is wrong, because the garden being so long and narrow, the flower-beds are more proportioned as they are planned than elongated. May Your Majesty decide what shall be done”.

This Flemish gardener was none other than Juan de Holvecq, who had raised objections to the proportion of the large flower-beds or basic modules of the garden proposed by Toledo, but the King, who always supported his architect, answered Hoyo, “Let us agree all this tonight. Because although it may be that this gardener does the layout well, I would be better satisfied if Juan Bautista were to do it and also that of the orchard.”

The Jardín de la Isla, like the architecture of the building itself, has seen three basic stages. The first corresponds to the time of Philip II, with the plans and the general layout of the three parts forming the garden: the Jardín de la Isla, the Huerta del Infante, to the north, and the spit of land at the end, known as La Isleta. This garden underwent modifications and, in particular, the addition of new fountains, at the time when Philip IV reorganised the palace. One exceptional testimony to these years is provided by the painting by Velázquez, now in the Museo del Prado, in which we can see the Fuente de Los

Tritones, today in the gardens of Campo del Moro in Madrid. Thirdly we have to consider the island's Bourbon period, with two approaches which differ considerably between the eighteenth century and the more romantic concepts of the nineteenth century, all of which blends together in the garden's appearance today.

Juan Bautista gave the island a basic layout of paths formed by rectangular units which in turn included flower-beds in a cruciform arrangement, all of it geometrically ordered, as befits a spatial composition conceived by a man of the Renaissance. Long symmetrical axes hierarchise the surfaces, crossing paths and reconciling the irregular perimeter of the island with the layout drawn with ruler and compass. By way of digression, not only the island, but the whole of the area of the Aranjuez plain, especially the part between the Jarama and the Tagus Rivers just before the point where they meet, is laid out according to the new spirit, so that the accesses, open spaces and large tree-lined avenues form intertwined open stars which have a powerful effect in perspective, as we can see in a plan by Juan de Herrera, who was not uninvolved in this basic process of defining the broad lines of the composition of the Sitio de Aranjuez. Similarly, the wide tree-lined promenades which converge on the palace, or the one coinciding with the future Calle de la Reina, are all given a dramatic treatment in a mixture of urban and landscape scenography.

However, compared with this open arrangement of large spaces, a forerunner of the endless perspective of the French gardening of Le Nôtre as well as of the novel baroque town-planning of Sixtus V's Rome, the island's gardens respond to a semi-open conception, as an intermediate step between the more private and intimate character of the Jardín del Rey, which forms part of the palace and leads off the private quarters, and the large avenues and tree-lined promenades for public use.

The island's gardens do indeed respond to an intermediate scale and their enjoyment by the royalty did not exclude visits by other people close to the King. In fact, in Velázquez's picture of the Fuente de los Tritones men-

tioned above one can see men and women, walking or sitting in the shade, which clearly illustrates the type of garden to which the one on the Aranjuez island belonged.

Access was exclusively by the Puente de la Reina, at one time a wooden bridge but a solid stone construction since 1744, with statues on pedestals, forming a picturesque entrance to the garden. From the top of the bridge one has a view over the garden, whose layout in the time of Philip II we have come to know in some detail from the analyses by Ana Luengo and Coro Millares. The first impression, immediately we set foot on the island, comes from the Fuente del Ochavado, named after the original octagonal form of the small square which still survives, though the fountain which began to be built there in 1570 to a design by the Italian priest Jerónimo Carruba was replaced by the present statue of Hercules in the time of Philip IV.

We know, in fact, that both Philip III and Philip IV altered, changed and introduced new fountains, so that we have to approach the Jardín de la Isla taking into account these superimposed works which affected not only the fountains, but also the farmland, flowers and trees, as the covered paths or "folías", the bowers and small wooden constructions over the Tagus, like covered miradors, have all disappeared, while the green of the predominant box has eclipsed the varied chromatic palette of the flowering plants of the early days.

As regards the fountains, we know that Philip IV commissioned a new arrangement from the architect Sebastián Herrera Barnuevo, which was completed between 1660 and 1661 and is the one which today prevails over Philip II's arrangement. The Fuente de Hércules, in the Plaza Ochavada, is the most monumental of the group, both in its position and in its sculptural work, which comes from Italy and is attributed to Alejandro Algardi. Its date of arrival is somewhere around 1661. The fountain itself stands in the centre of an unusual and attractive composition, since it gives the impression of being on an island reached by four bridges across the water, with entrances where we are met by pairs of statues

on pedestals. The base of the basin is also octagonal and in the centre, on a raised dish, is a sculpture of Hercules fighting the Hydra of Lërma. Next to this little square is one occupied by the Fuente de Apolo or Fuente de Ver-tumnus, whose statue stands in one of Aranjuez's finest basins, also octagonal, in Carrara marble and attributed to the early-seventeenth-century Neapolitan sculptor, Michelangelo Naccherino.

As Ponz noted in his *Viage de España* (1787), "the best part of this fountain are some bass reliefs of the labours of Hercules on the front of the basin, which alternate with the royal coat of arms". This fountain was also known as the Fuente de los Delfines, because of the eight dolphins with children to be seen on the corners of the basin, as Ponz himself saw and recorded.

Three promenades leave this Plazuela de Apolo, of which the central one coincides with the main path of the whole island and is known as the Calle de las Fuentes, as all the most noteworthy fountains are here. The first section of this promenade has jets of water which are concealed but from which the water spurts to some height, sprinkling unwary passers-by. This path leads to the Plaza de la Fuente del Reloj, a curious mixture of fountain and sundial at ground level, as the hours are marked off on the circular rim of the fountain and are indicated by the shadow projected from the central jet, an effect which is prevented today by the height of the surrounding trees. At different moments in its history this fountain has been known as the Fuente de las Horas and Fuente del Anillo.

Six large stone benches mark part of the perimeter of the square. Continuing along the same central path, we come to the Fuente del Niño de la Espina, which marks the geometrical centre of one of the units of the Jardín de la Isla, with its own personality of measures and proportions. This fountain in blackened bronze is also known as the Fuente del Negrillo. In fact it stands in the middle of an important square at whose corners are open pavilions with quarter-sphere vaults, housing benches, all done in marble and stone from Colmenar,

which once again reinforce the layout and the borders of the vegetation. They appear to have been designed by Sabatini in about 1782 to replace the earlier more fragile and taller wooden solutions which, like large niches, helped to completely enclose the square, as we see reproduced in one of the engravings from the *Délices de l'Espagne et du Portugal* (Leyden, 1707), which show many aspects of the original gardens on the island now lost or changed. The central fountain is accompanied by four columns in Cabra marble and Corinthian capitals in white Carrara marble, above which four harpies pour water into the basin, hence the name of Fuente de las Harpías and Plaza de las Harpías by which the fountain and square respectively are known. The construction was begun in 1615 by Juan Fernández and Pedro Garay, but the bronze of El Espinario, cast from the model Velázquez brought back from his second trip to Italy and which is kept in the Prado, was not installed until 1661.

The Fuente de Venus stands at the point where the two main paths of the first general layout for the Jardín de la Isla cross and is, in turn, the centre of another large garden well defined in the surrounding flower-beds. The bronze figure of Venus which crowns the fountain dates from the time of Philip II and seems to have been received from Florence in 1571. It is also known as the Fuente de Don Juan de Austria, as some have long related it with a stone brought by him from the Gulf of Lepanto from which the fountain was carved. Today it has lost the children Ponz was still able to see on the fountain pedestal and which are reproduced in Álvarez de Colmenar's *Délices de l'Espagne*, already mentioned.

At the end of this long line of fountains we come to the one in honour of Bacchus, which has a long history leading up to its present appearance. Ponz described it as follows: "The Fountain of Bacchus consists primarily of a statue of this deity, very different from the way in which, in general, he was represented by the ancients, that is good-looking and kindly. Here he figures as monstrously fat, sitting astride a barrel on top of the basin. It has no particular merit, though it has a good form, like

the rest of the fountain, and is made with care." Recent work has made it possible to elucidate these vague comments by Ponz. The pedestal, in Italian marble, is a documented work by the great sculptor Juan de Bologna, who carved it between 1566 and 1570 and included in it the group of Samson and the Philistine, today in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, a gift from Philip IV to Charles I of England in 1623. The pedestal was brought to Aranjuez and in 1661 was installed on La Isleta and crowned with the Bacchus, mentioned above, by the Flemish sculptor Joghlenlink. Undoubtedly this was a poor exchange. As an added curiosity, this well-travelled fountain by Juan de Bologna, originally Italian, Spanish by adoption and fated to be English, was a gift from the Duke of Tuscany to the Duke de Lerma, and from the latter to Philip III, who kept it in Valladolid. The Fuente de Baco forms the centre of a large square with its inevitable *canapés* or long stone benches with backrests. These, like the previous ones, date from the eighteenth century, and were designed by Sabatini under the auspices of Charles III.

The last of the monumental fountains preserved is the Fuente de Neptuno, at a turn in the main path in the direction of La Isleta. In its current situation, it could easily be taken for the remains of a shipwreck, as it is nothing like the description by Ponz when he says that the so-called Fuente de Neptuno "has seven sculptural groups of average size, executed in bronze, of which material the pedestals are made; they are placed around the same basin, and one above it. This one represents Neptune on a conch-shaped chariot, armed with a trident and drawn by Tritons, whose group is repeated on one of the six pedestals, like the group featuring Ceres on her chariot drawn by lions. The same goes for the group with Juno, who is represented in the act of hurling thunderbolts at the giants, so that the six are in fact three but duplicated. The seventh is unique and features Jupiter also hurling thunderbolts at the giants, but it has its du-

plicate in an item in the Buen Retiro, where there is also a duplicate of the group in which Hercules fights with the Hydra, which was not placed on this fountain."

Of all this large family of gods and goddesses, the only ones that have been preserved in place are the Neptune group and the repeated groups featuring Ceres or Cybele, while the rest have disappeared. Strangely, there is only one empty pedestal although four groups are missing, all of which complicates the history of this fountain, on whose pedestal is an inscription reading, "The King Our Lord Don Philip III commanded the construction of this fountain, under the governorship of Don Francisco de Brizuela. Year MDCXXI": However, this date –1621– refers to the original fountain to which were later added these groups in bronze in the general reform of about 1661. They appear to have been specially commissioned from the great Italian sculptor Alessandro Algardi, a contemporary of Bernini. It appears that these groups in Aranjuez were specially commissioned by Velázquez, during his fruitful second trip to Rome, for a room in the Alcázar in Madrid, though they ended up here, in the Jardín de la Isla.

The last fountain in the series, the most outstanding, is the Fuente de los Tritones, which was moved, as mentioned, from the gardens of the Palacio Real in Madrid in 1845. It had previously occupied various points in the piece of land at the end of the island, known as La Isleta. It is undoubtedly an Italian work from the end of the sixteenth century, possibly Genoese, and for which the only reliable information comes from the inscription Ponz read on the base: "The King Our Lord Don Philip IV commanded that this fountain be installed in the year of our Lord one thousand, six hundred and fifty-seven, under the governorship of Don García de Brizuela y Cárdenas". This means that previous to the work commissioned from Herrera Bar-nuevo in 1660 Philip IV was already making substantial improvements to the Jardín de la Isla.

THE BOURBON AGE

Both the Palace and the Jardines de la Isla saw no events of any importance until the arrival of the new Bourbon dynasty, and it was the new king, Philip IV, who soon took an interest in the completion of the palace, as well as going ahead with the ambitious project at Aranjuez, not just as a palace and garden, but as a Royal Residence. The palace at that time was modest in appearance but satisfactorily and occasionally fulfilled its role as a pleasant summer residence. This is what Juan Álvarez de Colmenar tells us in his *Délices de l'Espagne*, already mentioned, when in 1707—that is before the new building campaigns were undertaken—he wrote, “The royal residence, though quite beautiful, is what is at present most uncared for. It is only furnished when the King is here; there are some pictures of quality, and a lounge which is very agreeable in summer because of the cool, everything in marble, and supported on columns of the same material”. He goes on to supply us with information taking us back to the time of Philip IV, which must have been the date Leoni’s bronze statue of Charles V—today in the rotunda of the Museo del Prado—was removed to the palace at Aranjuez, where Álvarez de Colmenar saw it “in the large courtyard, square and paved with marble”, next to a fountain.

One thing we know is that in 1715 Philip V commissioned Pedro Caro Idrogo—whom Ceán says was “a guard in the King’s armies and Philip V’s quartermaster sergeant”, serving in the town as master builder and surveyor for the royal works for the palace in Madrid, since his appointment as such in 1712—to study the continuation of the palace works, very probably with the old plans

of the original palace and, of course, Mora’s plans, mentioned above, still before him. The fact is that in 1719 Idrogo had already started on the work, which called for the prior demolition of the Casa Maestral, which until then had been joined to Philip II’s palace, advancing the construction in the northern sector, by royal decree of 2 May 1727, in line with the plans and dates contained in the projects conserved, both in the Archivo General de Palacio and in the Servicio General del Ejército (1728). Idrogo retrieved the original idea of the turreted façade, whose foundations were begun in 1728, and put forward new solutions for the main staircase, as well as a different distribution of rooms and uses in line not only with the new courtly etiquette of the Bourbons but also with the occupation of part of the palace by the offices of some branches of the administration, such as the Treasury and the Departments of War and of the Indies, all set around the palace’s central courtyard. This coincides with the remarks on the palace made by the traveller Étienne de Silhouette who, on visiting Spain in 1729 to 1730, said, “the royal home is quite beautiful and when I visited it they were working on an extension.”

Idrogo must have had some differences of opinion with the governor and superintendent of the work, Juan Antonio Samaniego, who in 1731 presented charges against the architect’s work. He, for his part, was unable to reply as he died the following year, in 1732, and Caro Idrogo, whom Bottineau refers to as a military engineer, was succeeded by two more French military engineers, Étienne Marchand and Léandre Brachelieu, of which the former also died very soon, in 1733, so that there was

very little he could do. Brachelieu, on the other hand, advanced the work considerably and completed the main façade in 1739, on which was written, according to Ceán, an inscription in Latin, which this author transcribes; reminding us that this “opus magnum” had been built thanks to Philip IV and completed on the date indicated.

This period featuring the French engineers was followed by that of the Italian architects. Thus we come across Giacomo Bonavía, from Piacenza, and, later on, Francesco Sabatini, from Palermo, to whom we owe the general aspect dominating the building, both inside and outside, from the main façade to the great staircase and the new chapel. Bonavía first started as Brachelieu’s assistant, then went on to design the great staircase in 1744 and finally, following his appointment on 29 September 1745, as principal director at the head of the works of the Palacio de Aranjuez until his death in 1759. Not to mention his responsibility in the larger work of the Royal Residence, from strictly urban aspects to occasional architectural aspects, such as the delightful chapel of San Antonio presiding over the square of the same name in Aranjuez, in which architecture and the city overlap in an exemplary manner. While these commissions, with their enormous responsibility, are not in fact the subject of these lines now, we must not forget Bonavía’s feverish activity during those years, at the same time as he attended to the palace at Aranjuez.

Bonavía’s work on the palace is far-reaching as, for one thing, with the main work of the 1715 project still unfinished (it was not completed until 1752), he devoted himself to the interiors, of which one exceptional item is the great ceremonial staircase, with its spectacular development, as well as the painstaking decoration of the royal apartments of Philip V and Isabella Farnese. But at the same time Bonavía had to put right the damage caused by an accidental fire in 1747, in what was a very important job of reconstruction.

Documentary accounts since his appointment in 1745 in fact refer to the finishes on pavings and furnishings, where payments to woodcarvers, decorators and

gilders, such as Juan Arranz, Matías Pérez, Manuel Corrales and Próspero de Mórtola, amongst others, reveal that the work of furnishing was nearing completion and that in the months of November and December the last touches were being given to the Queen’s quarters.

It was precisely in the queen’s rooms that the terrible fire that ravaged the building in the early morning of 16 June 1748 began. This forced Bonavía to play a prominent role in the royal building, since as well as trying to complete it once and for all, he had to take on the reconstruction of a large part of the northern sector. On that day the King and Queen were in residence in the palace, though they were not now Philip V, who had died in 1746, and Isabella Farnese, who was in the palace at La Granja, but Ferdinand VI and Barbara of Braganza, daughter of John V of Portugal, who were unharmed but who immediately moved to Madrid, to the palace of Buen Retiro.

The palace of Aranjuez was badly damaged, both by the fire and by the haste with which they tried to check it. The new projects affected the architecture of the main façade, which was given the definitive aspect it has today, with its three levels and crowning garret, which sums up the building’s agitated history, through the representation and name of its kings and queens. Indeed, crowning the central gable are the sculptures carved by Pedro Martinengo, following models by Olivieri, representing, from right to left, Philip II, Ferdinand VI, slightly higher, and Philip V. The formidable escutcheon with the royal coat of arms, designed by Bonavía and carried out by Arranz, was also completed in 1752, when the work can be considered completed, according to the inscription included on the garret on two cartouches:

PHILIPPUS II. INSTITUIT	FERDINANDUS VI. PIUS FELIX
PHILIPPUS V. PROVEXIT	CONSUMMAVIT AN. MDCCLII

This main façade, whose architecture respects the spirit of Philip II’s work as regards formal restraint, materials and colour, added, as its one licence, the protruding

gateway on the ground floor and some simple curved and triangular pediments on the balconies and windows of the main and upper floors, giving rise to a stately, palatial façade. However, unlike what we might logically expect of the interior from contemplation of this beautiful façade from the outside, there are no royal quarters behind this surface, no throne room, no pomp. In fact, all the numerous balconies and windows illuminate the great staircase designed by Bonavía in 1744 which had been one of the elements which took longest to decide in the history of the building of the palace. While Toledo's project, so far as we know, instead of a single large, impressive, open staircase, allows for staircases between walls, and the one planned by Gómez de Mora tends to link it with the central courtyard, where it gets its light from, the same as Idrogo, sacrificing the fourth bay of the central courtyard, Bonavía turns all the space between the façade and the courtyard into a monumental staircase, ensuring generous natural lighting on two sides, and develops a colossal staircase with multiple accesses at the base which converge on a landing from which a single flight leads to the next landing, splitting in two from here to reach the upper floor. All this movement is accompanied by excellent wrought iron banisters with touches of gilding, in an attractive rococo style, while magnificent busts by Antoine Coysevox signed in 1683 observe the new arrival from their pedestals. Undoubtedly, the new Bourbon dynasty wanted to remember its members in this way, the same as Philip IV had done in the Jardín de las Estatuas, as the figures to be seen on the staircase represent Louis XIV, Marie-Thérèse of Austria and their son, the dauphin of France and father of Philip V, to whom we owe the decision to finish the palace at Aranjuez. Nevertheless, this solemn, dramatic staircase, worthy of the finest European palace of its time, lacks the chromatic support of the mural paintings which brought colour to the vault covering it, today deprived of this vital breath of air.

We have yet to mention the final campaign on the building, since after the death of Ferdinand VI in 1759, the same year that his architect Bonavía died, the new

King, Charles III, considered that the capacity of the palace was very limited and some of the rooms were very small, such as Philip II's old chapel or the theatre under the northern tower. He therefore gave a royal order, on 13 June 1770, in which he announced via the Marquis de Grimaldi, First Secretary of State, his wish that "in the palace of Aranjuez two wings should be added on the corners of the main block towards the west, under the plans designed by Sabatini and his direction", and ordering the works to be offered for tender with the conditions established by this architect. The work was adjudicated to Kearney y Compañía, whose offer was the most favourable for the Royal Exchequer.

Sabatini conceived this enlargement as two wings perpendicular to the main façade of the palace, forming a parade ground or "cour d'honneur", in such a way that at the same time as the Royal Town grew towards the east, the palace faced ever more decidedly in the opposite direction, as a result of the focalization forced on it by Sabatini's two parallel wings. Sabatini extended the dominant nature of the existing palace, inserting a natural graft on to the old building while keeping the changes and novelties for the interior. The most noticeable of these changes was the inclusion of a new palace chapel at the end of the south wing to replace the old one, and the plan –later distorted– for the court theatre in the north wing, two unusual rooms it is not possible to appreciate from outside. The work went on at a steady pace, so that, as we are reminded by the inscriptions on the walls overlooking the new parade ground, most of this enlargement by Charles III was carried out between 1772 and 1777.

Finally, I would add that not only the palace but, under the Bourbons in the eighteenth century, both the Jardín de la Isla and the palace's immediate surroundings, in an operation to relate them to the neighbourhood, saw a series of improvements, reforms and additions. Very briefly, Bonavía himself worked on the walls surrounding the island, planned new bridges exclusively for royal use and planned buildings for the Jardín de la

Isla, like the well-known bower dating from 1775 which accompanied or replaced other existing ones, some of which appear in the best-known views of Aranjuez. At the same time, the new French gardeners in the King's service had introduced the novel taste for "broderies", like Esteban Boutelou in the flower garden planned for the island in 1748, of which barely the site it once occupied remains, today presided by the Fuente de Diana.

Probably the most noticeable change to take place in the area around the palace was the introduction of El Parterre under its southern façade, as is perfectly clear in the view of the Royal Palace painted by Antonio Joli, which is kept in the Royal Palace in Naples, in the two excellent canvases by Francesco Battaglioli, today in the Museo del Prado, which show aspects of the festival of San Fernando in 1756, in which El Parterre is an essential element of the pictures, and in the panoramic view engraved in 1773 by Domingo de Aguirre. This mention of the attractive pictures by painters and engravers has no other object than to call up the original appearance El Parterre once had, as designed by Marchand in 1728 and very different to the one it offers today.

The fact that this garden was planned for the back of the palace probably derives from the fact that the King's and Queen's sleeping quarters were set on this side after the changes produced in the palace's new interior layout. In this way, under their balconies they would see a French-style garden designed by a Frenchman for the grandson of Louis XIV of France, at the same time as, beyond the wall of El Parterre, they would see the leafy trees of the Calle de la Reina, as well as the Calle del Príncipe and the future Calle de las Infantas, forming a trident converging on El Parterre and the

palace. In other words, over and above its essence as a mere garden, El Parterre was a multiple hinge in a key point in the planning of the Royal Town, in relation to the palace, the town and the entrance from Madrid via the Puente de Barcas.

El Parterre was conceived as a very flat composition, with hardly any relief, dominated by the "broderies" and the "gazon", with delicate rows of lime-trees and brought to life with simple fountains, all very delicate, as befits the conception of a parterre. Nevertheless, this very fragility was its own worst enemy, as everything done since then, especially in the nineteenth century, profoundly altered the garden, when the design of the paths was changed, powerful species such as conifers and magnolias were planted which brought stateliness and shade to a garden which was further and further from Marchand's plans. Notable works which contributed to the first alterations in the restful Parterre were the ditch or canal around it, which we owe to the French architect Marquet and was built under Charles III, as we see in the well-known painting by Paret, and the introduction in 1827 of the Fuente de los Trabajos de Hércules, or Fuente de Hércules y Anteo, designed by Isidro Velázquez in the time of Ferdinand VII, with sculptures by Juan Adán, amongst other artists. There is also another series of noteworthy fountains and statues, of varying origin, like the one of Ceres and the groups of children with flowers, by Robert Michel, or the smaller ones of the Nereids, in lead, the work of Joaquín Dumandre, which arrived here from the palace of Valsaín. Some magnificent vases or jars in Carrara marble, carved in the eighteenth century, complete the sculptural elements in this eighteenth-century parterre with its romantic aroma.

FROM PALACE TO MUSEUM

After two hundred years of works and projects, four centuries of use and two ruling dynasties, the palace of the Austrias and the Bourbons has found a new end as a museum in itself. The tour of its palatial rooms, which in this long period of time have seen changes in their names and their functions, is the best way to enter into a past which takes us back, especially, to the eighteenth century, without forgetting all that the nineteenth century added to the furnishings and the decoration of the rooms, which was no small matter. Having lost the indoor atmosphere of the Austrias, the visit to the palace of Aranjuez today is above all a pleasant introduction to the art of the Bourbon court in Spain, where a certain equilibrium is reached between Italian and French, because although the large porcelain room or the ceilings have an Italian air to them, the dominant air of a large part of the furnishings is, through the Empire style, French.

The most interesting rooms and the ones with most character are to be found on the upper floor. Here we shall look briefly at the most important rooms making up the Queen's quarters, which occupy approximately the northern half of the palace, and the King's rooms, located to the south. Both these areas had, at the beginning of the tour, an inner guard room under the command of the Guardia de Corps. The Queen's guard room, reached from the main staircase, conserves a fine collection of pictures by Lucas Jordán with episodes from the life of King Solomon and Empire style furniture, with three excellent Louis XIV console tables.

Whereas everyone had access to the Saleta de la Reina to be received by the Queen, protocol only permitted access to the next room, the Antecámara de la Reina, to religious leaders, ambassadors, authorities and people of a certain social standing. Immediately afterwards, making up the three rooms which eighteenth-century etiquette called for, comes the Cámara de la Reina, where the English piano the Empress Eugénie de Montijo gave to Isabella II is kept and overlooking the Jardín de la Isla.

The Anteoratorio and Oratorio, on the other hand, open off the central courtyard, and the pictures being very noteworthy, such as that representing Saint Anthony of Padua, by Giaquinto, the clock by Hoffmeyer and the beautiful mosaic compositions done in the Vatican's stone workshops, our interest searches the Oratorio for Villanueva's work. In fact, this item reminds us of Charles IV's minor interventions in Aranjuez, on this occasion commissioning Juan de Villanueva, the architect of the Museo del Prado, with the transformation of this room in Oratorio, with noble materials and skilful artifices. Marble, stucco and gilded bronze, well worked by the Ferroni brothers, and the frescos by the court painter Francisco Bayeu, signed in 1790, guarantee the interest of the Oratorio, which, as a small chapel, has an altarpiece on which Mariano Salvador Maella painted a *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*.

The Salón del Trono is located in the northern bay and its three balconies give on to the Jardín de la Isla. The atmosphere and the furnishings clearly belong to the time of Isabella II, when the ceiling was painted by Vicente Ca-

marón (1851) and it was furnished with imposing console tables and mirrors that are typical of the period. The seating, close to the socles, which look like marble but are of excellent stucco imitating serpentine, also belongs to this period, while the throne is Louis XVI. As befits the throne room, the vaulted ceiling exalts the Monarchy, accompanied by the Virtues, the Arts and Industry.

Between the Salón del Trono and the exceptional Saleta de Porcelana, we find the so-called Despacho or Cámara Oficial de la Reina, reserved for receiving the highest nobility and civil and religious leaders. It has excellent Neo-classical seating, of the time of Charles IV, in mahogany and satinwood encrusted with ebony, whose design has been attributed to Mariano Salvador Maella.

The Saleta or Gabinete de Porcelana is definitely the most unusual work in the whole palace and an example of eighteenth-century interest in everything Oriental, everything exotic and picturesque, in short what has been described as chinoiserie, in the sense of extravagant and showy, in contrast with Western culture and tastes. All this is what contemplation of this room indeed arouses after having seen the others. Inevitably, surprise and amazement strikes anyone visiting Aranjuez, as it did in the past, on coming to this corner of the palace. Its incorporation is due to the reforms undertaken by Charles III, whose favourite room this was for more intimate meetings.

This was an early intervention in the palace, long before the enlargement by Sabatini, as the commission for the work dates from 1760. The work was done in the Real Fábrica de Porcelana which the King, immediately on his arrival in the Court, ordered to be established in 1759 in the Buen Retiro in Madrid, imitating the one he had left behind in Capodimonte, in the Kingdom of Naples. Charles III brought modellers and technicians, like Giuseppe Gricci and Scheppers, who successfully completed the work in 1765, before then beginning the Sala de Porcelana which Charles III himself introduced into the Palacio Real in Madrid, though this one is much smaller than the one in Aranjuez. Large ceramic panels

attached to a wooden framework illustrate typical Oriental scenes from China and Japan, in which parrot sellers, samurais, musicians, mandarins, family groups of parents and children, provide the argument for the general background made up of a pattern of garlands, fruits and birds covering the walls and the ceiling. From the ceiling hangs a lamp with the same formal elements, also in porcelain, the same as the frames of the mirrors which reflect and multiply all these motifs in a dreamlike image where space has no real limits. The colour, in its rich ceramic tones, helps to highlight this jewel of the European rococo art of the eighteenth century.

The last two rooms associated with the Queen are the Dormitorio and the Tocador, both of which have balconies overlooking El Parterre. The first is unique in that it conserves the furniture offered to Isabella II on the occasion of her marriage to Don Francisco de Asís de Borbón, entirely made in that town with excellent wood and applications of bronze and marquetry. This highly elaborate style, with its rococo touches, especially noticeable in the frills and trimmings on the bed, the prie-dieu and the pelmets for the curtains, seems to flutter beneath the painted ceiling by Zacarías González Velázquez, where a further allegory of the Monarchy unfolds, along with Justice, Science, the Virtues and Law.

On the other hand, the painting on the ceiling of the Tocador de la Reina, representing the *Four Seasons*, is by Don Vicente Camarón. Its more free-and-easy character goes well with this whimsical room, dressed in Talavera silk, where the furniture and the general decoration reveals the tastes of the time of Isabella II.

The Queen's and the King's quarters are today separated by the Salón de Baile, located in the centre of the façade overlooking El Parterre, on the axis of the Palace. The atmosphere reflects that of the nineteenth century, presided by the portraits of Alfonso XII and Alfonso XIII painted by Ojeda and Garneldo respectively.

A large part of these rooms we know today by their present name were put to different uses in the past.

What we call the Comedor de Gala, next to the Salón de Baile but opening on to the central courtyard on the interior, was the Sala de Conversación under Ferdinand VI, until Charles III gave it a new purpose. This is the room that best preserves what could have been the image of the rococo palace, as everything from the floor to the vaulted ceiling, including the pictures specially painted for this room by Giaquinto, with the *Story of Joseph*, conforms to a programme of decoration and a single late baroque spirit. The floor has excellent stucco-work by Carlos Antonio Bernasconi, representing a mass of military trophies in the centre, accompanied by wide bands of very expressively rococo open forms. In a similar spirit, the ceiling of the room is framed by white stucco-work, with the four parts of the world at the corners, while the central part of the ceiling contains an allegory exalting the Virtues of Monarchy, accompanied by Justice, Religion, Abundance, Munificence and Peace. It was painted by Ferdinand VI's Court painter, Santiago Amiconi, between 1750 and 1752.

In the oldest part of the palace, though much altered, are the King's rooms, which are reached from the main staircase, after crossing the large, naked Sala de Guardias del Rey. Small rooms, the result of later divisions, house what are called the Habitación de Pinturas Chinas, the Antedespacho or Sala de Trabajo del Rey, the Despacho del Rey and the Salón de Espejos, all four with balconies towards the Jardín del Rey, facing south. The first of these rooms takes its exotic name from the orderly decoration of its walls with a collection of two hundred pictures barely twenty centimetres high, with Chinese scenes painted in water-colours on rice paper, very probably at the end of the eighteenth century. The technique is highly refined and descriptive, with an elegance of line and colour that reveal an exceptional mastery on the part of their anonymous creator. It appears to be a gift from the Emperor of China to Queen Isabella II and the lamp which aims at an elementary Oriental appearance in line with the decoration of the pictures must date from the same time. We find the

same approach in the Oriental-style pedestal table in the centre of the room, well accompanied by the excellent eighteenth-century baroque seating, with white lacquering and silk upholstery, which probably came from the Sala de Porcelana mentioned above. Zacarías González Velázquez was the painter responsible for the rustic scenes under the arches of the vault.

The Antedespacho del Rey contains a good collection of paintings, from the canvas by Mayno representing *Saint Matthew the Evangelist*, to the two views by Mazo and the large series of the *Prodigal Son* by Romanelli. The furniture mixes Charles III and Charles IV items from the Real Fábrica de La Granja. The glass chandelier hanging from the ceiling, with its Pompeian-style decoration, is usually attributed to the painter Juan Duque. This same artist painted the allegory of the Liberal Arts on the vault of the adjacent Despacho del Rey, a small room containing noteworthy paintings attributed to Furini, Solimena, Madagan and Laguna, though the series of furniture is what most attracts attention, due to its quality and beauty. While the seating and the King's work table, which date from the time of Ferdinand VII, are magnificent, our attention centres on the exceptional writing desk against the wall, in olive root and marble panels overlaid with gilded bronze work, by the French cabinet-maker Jacob Desmaller. Two porcelain vases in the same Empire style stand on it, flanking a biscuit of the Buen Retiro with the famous group of the Toro Farnesio. Amongst many other outstanding items it is worth mentioning the two-faced clock on the mantelpiece, signed by Fernández de la Peña, and the English grandfather clock signed by John Shelton, dating from the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Salón de los Espejos, also called the Salón de Vestirse, is located in the corner formed by the façade over the Jardín del Rey and the one overlooking the Parterre, so that the mirrors, manufactured in La Granja and covering all the walls, multiply the light from the two planes, creating that sought-after, infinitely reflected and repeated image. The room in its present state was

conceived in the time of Charles IV by the architect Juan de Villanueva, who set models and directed the work between 1790 and 1795. The furniture is the work of the Court cabinet-maker José López and the paintings on the ceiling, like the previous ones, are by Juan Duque, who completed them in 1803.

On arriving at the Dormitorio del Rey, we see the balanced Neo-classical spirit provided by the Empire-style furniture but which does not match the spectacular nature of the painted ceiling by Amiconi, belonging to the baroque tradition of imitation architectures in perspective, giving the room a monumental air which is only apparent but very effective. The central break allows a view of the allegories of Peace and of Justice, painted by Bartolomé Rusca, floating above the room. One of the finest pictures in the Palacio de Aranjuez hangs here, above the head of the bed: the *Christ on the Cross* painted especially for the royal bedchamber between 1761 and 1769 by Antonio Rafael Mengs, at one time Charles III's Court painter. Mengs began other paintings in the enlargement of the palace carried out by Sabatini, such as the ceiling of what was to be the ballroom, which disappeared as a large hall when it was divided by the reforms carried out by Villanueva to house the Prince of Parma.

Next door to the royal bedchamber is one of the most surprising rooms in the palace. I am referring to the Gabinete Árabe or Salón de Fumar, a typically romantic room from the time of Isabella II, begun in 1855

by Rafael Contreras, at that time restorer of the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra in Granada, with whose interiors it is presumably intended to relate. From the slightly Mozarabic dome hangs a calamine lamp, beneath which is a table in bronze and glass with a porcelain top depicting the scene of the flight from the Alhambra by Boabdil, the work of Robert and a gift from King Louis-Philippe of France to Queen María Cristina, during the minority of the future Isabella II.

The Anteoratorio, the King's small private Oratorio and the Cámara del Rey, which open on to the central courtyard, close this short tour of the palace's most significant rooms, in which one can evoke the existence of other Royal Residences through the beautiful views painted by Fernando Brambilla of El Escorial and La Granja.

Though both the King and Queen had their own private chapels, there was nevertheless no public chapel after the changes made to Philip II's. To make up for this, an excellent chapel was conceived for the south wing of Sabatini's enlargement, with access from the outside, which was consecrated in 1799. Its interior is of a moderate classicism, with a Tuscan pilastered order and a beautiful dome painted by Francisco Bayeu. Over the cornice can be seen putti supporting heavy garlands and a sculptural group over the high altar, all of them by the French sculptor Robert Michel. From the high altar, a Virgin by Mariano Salvador Maella presides the regal chapel, with gilded bronze touches by Fabio Vendetti.

EL JARDÍN DEL PRÍNCIPE

The Calle de la Reina, which joins the bridge of the same name in a straight line to the Puente de las Barcas, next to the Parterre del Palacio, forms the southern border of a wide strip of land bounded by the deep meanders of the Tagus River. In this area, with a long history of market gardens and farming, a series of gardens started to take shape during the reign of Ferdinand VI centring on the Calle del Embarcadero, planted with poplars in 1754, which ran perpendicular to the Calle de la Reina towards the royal wharf. Here, the monarchs and their entourage boarded the attractive feluccas or shallow-bottomed boats which made up the so-called Tagus squadron, very often in the playful musical context oriented by Farinelli. Evenly spaced rest pavilions, El Sotillo and La Huerta de la Primavera, close this first, simple picture of the future Jardín del Príncipe.

In spite of being named in the singular, the Jardín del Príncipe is in fact a series of gardens which were originally planned as separate gardens, in their nature, design and planting, since, as Ponz pointed out in his *Viage de España*, "this garden can be said to be six different gardens", as we shall see later, and without counting that he never came to see it completed, which did not take place until about 1804. Most of the work was carried out under Charles IV but takes the name of El Príncipe because it was begun when, while still Prince of Asturias, King Charles II, by a Royal Decree of 3 October 1772, ordered the formation of gardens for which he had available the great architect Juan de Villanueva and the gardener Pablo de Boutelou, born in Aranjuez and the son of Esteban Boutelou, who had already worked

in the Real Sitio in the service of Ferdinand VI. The royal family showed a great fondness for gardens; the infante Don Gabriel had a small garden with summer houses on the other side of the Tagus and the infante Don Antonio had "his private garden planted with excellent fruit trees and good vegetables...in the small grove next to the Jardín de la Isla, close to the Palace"; as Ponz recalls, both of which were planned and cared for by the same people as the Jardín del Príncipe.

In the latter, the talent of the architect Villanueva can be seen in the monumental entrances, especially those which lead from the Calle de la Reina to the Embarcadero and the Casa del Labrador. The first is conceived in the old style, with two "tetrapyla", made up of two separate sections with four Ionic columns each, forming an exercise of composition which is powerfully classicist in character, as it is a mere architectural order with its plinth, column and entablature, whose base houses the guardroom. According to ancient descriptions, such as Ponz's, "in the space left by the columns two beautiful Greek statues have been placed, though restored, from the collection of San Ildefonso, life-size marble representations of Pallas and Flora", both of which have today disappeared, though the ones by the sculptor Pedro Michel have been preserved.

The entrance leading to the Casa del Labrador is more Neo-classical even than the previous one. The Doric Roman elevation takes on an original composition in which the order appears as such, isolated on a single column, and next to it the pilastered solutions in combination with the arch and the lintel, as a sample of the typically Roman compositional order.

The garden's different sections offer a varied image where the most significant point for the history of Spanish gardens is the presence of the first traces of the picturesque or landscape garden, in the English style, which Ponz, on account of its origin and style, calls Anglo-Gallic, as well as observing that there was also an attempt to imitate the beautiful disorder of Nature, with paths that wind their way amongst copses and trees of romantic bearing such as weeping willows and cypresses, all very different to what until then had been the French geometrical discipline of the gardens of Aranjuez.

In view of the importance of the eye-witness accounts of the author of *Viage de España*, one of the most comprehensive documentary sources for what the Jardín del Príncipe was in 1787 –that is, in Charles III's lifetime–, I shall transcribe Ponz's description, repeated later by other authors, along with the one by Álvarez de Quindós, which is a bit later (1800): "In the first garden the trees form various avenues and three squares, with double rows around, one of plane trees, one of acacias and another of elms. Between the avenues are small meadows or lawns accompanied by little trees; some areas have flowers and rose-bushes which, when cut equally have, in the rose season, a wonderful effect. It is located between the river that bathes it along its length and the Calle del Embarcadero. It is three times as long as it is wide. Its avenues start by forming beautiful vaults. The squares and the wall in this part of the garden are decorated with vases or flowerpots from Alcora. This piece could be called Anglo-Gallic because of its straight avenues; in between it has meadows with plants and flowers in the English style.

The second garden was destined for trees and exotic fruits and some vegetables; in it there is a flower-bed for growing just carnations; there are more than a hundred and forty counting orange trees, lemon trees and citrons, which produce in abundance, regardless of their being young and planted in soil from which they can not be moved. In winter they are protected against the cold.

The third garden was formed with the object of imitating the beautiful disorder of Nature and hiding arti-

fice, according to the English fashion, as can be seen in the mixture of various kinds of trees; in the groups that form in its crooked avenues, in the new objects which come to sight as we walk along them. The trees on the three *ánditos*, or widest avenues, have to form a vault, giving a withdrawn and hidden air to the space beneath, which is planted with cinnamons, cypresses, weeping willows, bay-trees, palm-trees, Judas trees, morello cherry trees and double-flowered cherries, with many others from America and other places. This beautiful garden is twice as long as it is wide.

The fourth part, or let us say the fourth garden, is like a large meadow crossed by crooked paths, in different directions; the three widest lead to an oval-shaped square, and are twenty-five feet in diameter; the first, of Oriental planes; the second, of American planes; the third, of elms. The trees in this square are three-pointed acacias and American planes. The width of the avenues varies, but they are all adorned with many kinds of trees from America and other places. The meadows are adorned with flowers, either singly or grouped with rose-bushes, myrtle, tree strawberries, lilies, rubber trees, mangroves, etc. Next to the arsenal, and opposite the fruit orchard, there are little groves of flowering trees. This place could be called an Anglo-Chinese garden.

The fifth garden, located between the Tagus, the eastern fence and the Jardín de la Primavera, is twice the size of the one I have just referred to, and is crossed by an avenue with four rows of Oriental planes; it leads to one of the iron gates where the Jardín de la Primavera ends. The paths in this garden are of different widths, and His Highness drew them on the plans and laid them out as they had to be, which makes a beautiful effect. There are some meadows with a range of trees, of rose-bushes and other flowers; some with just grass and with meadows and groves, all alternating very gracefully. There are also avenues with trees destined to form a vault, many fruit trees and others that are not, bushes of all kinds, singly and grouped with rose-bushes and other different flowers, all with remarkable variety, as one

can not go two steps without finding new and pleasant things. At the foot of some of the trees one finds honeysuckle, passionflower, Bignoniaradicans, or Virginia jasmine; cinnamons, tree strawberries, myrtles, etc.

In the sixth and last district, which, as I have said, forms a right angle with the Calle de la Reina, the gates and the jetty, His Highness ordered that the trees should be preserved that were in it when it was still wild; that is the year 1785, and they are white poplars, oaks, ash trees, hawthorn, etcetera. He ordered the formation of artificial lawns and avenues of Lombardy poplars and planes. In the meadows there are trees of many species, such as the Levant cypresses and our own, cedars of Lebanon and red cedars from Virginia, pine trees, Judas trees and many others. At the foot of the largest, vine shoots have been placed to form grapevines and marry them, Greek "periploca", "pasaloides" from Carolina, which makes bunches of blue flowers; virgin vine, Virginia jasmine; all of them creepers that wind round and climb to the crowns of the highest trees, some of which are covered in ivy; so that in a short time this will be the most fanciful and varied place imaginable..."

A plan we know of, signed by Pablo Boutelou in 1784, coincides substantially with this detailed description. All that is needed to complete the whole are what have been called the seventh and eighth gardens, the latter surrounding the Casa del Labrador, and the later Parque de Miraflores, which, like the two before, either never took shape as planned or were much altered later. The Parque de Miraflores was to reach the Puente de la Reina, where it met with the avenue of the same name and the River Tagus.

Amongst the most characteristic elements in the Jardín del Príncipe, and before referring to its fine collection of fountains, we must not forget the fish pond, or Chinese pond, a small artificial lake from which emerge on tiny islands a circular pavilion in graceful Neo-classical architecture and a Chinese pavilion, after leaving on the bank a grotto and an obelisk with Egyptian reminiscences. The powerful surrounding nature becomes a nat-

ural frame for a genuine painting tinged with romantic beauty. Here, as I wrote elsewhere, the dialectic established between the erudite pavilion with its rich marbles, in a fine Ionic order, and the Chinese pavilion, in wood and with a more Gothic air to it, the two face to face, in the middle of a prolific nature and floating on the water, illustrates the inner contradiction of Neo-classical culture which, on one hand, is created from the rational architecture of orders, and on the other, approaches the sentiment of the secret attraction of everything exotic. Is this a mere juxtaposition of criteria? Simple whimsy? A reduction of the basic languages of architecture? Are we looking at architecture/painting or are we admiring a landscape with a poetic vein? These and many other things come to mind as we contemplate this corner of the Jardín del Príncipe, by Villanueva and Boutelou, which offers so many suggestive points of view and which only lacks the music of Joaquín Rodrigo to leave us speechless.

From the accounts and the details provided by Álvarez de Quindós, and which today either do not exist or have been disfigured, I can not resist the temptation to reproduce the description he gives of this brilliant part of the garden, as it was when he saw it in the first years of the nineteenth century, shortly after its completion: "Between the two avenues which leave the Fuente de Apolo and the third gate, surrounded by strange trees and flower-beds, is a large lake in which there are fish of various colours, red, golden, white and speckled. The water enters [not today] by a rock or grotto which begins on an islet, where we can admire the propriety with which nature is imitated in the position of the stones, in which art does not seem to intervene. Behind this same grotto, on another rock, stands a granite obelisk whose colour imitates oriental hazel granite and which is supported on four bronze turtles, placed on a pedestal or plinth of the same stone. From the grotto and island a bridge leads across the water to communicate with a beautiful Chinese pavilion which forms the entrance. It is octagonal in shape with four doors and the same number of windows in its walls. It has two parts to it and is

closed on top in the form of a steeple or belfry. Above which is a spire with five diminishing tops, adorned with graceful pennants and festoons, and finishing in a large golden ball pierced by the spire. The walls are of Chinese friezes covered with different patterns, so that from outside one enjoys the interior and on the cornices pennants with other patterns with little metal bells, placed so that they are easily moved by the wind. In front, and slightly separated, is the entrance in every way the same with a large number of little bells on the architrave and façade. The area surrounding the bower is planted with grass and enclosed in a low parapet. Everything is in beautifully carved wood painted in white, red and golden fillets. The paving in delicately arranged jasper, and in the middle of a landing of the same material. The corners are adorned with porcelain flowerpots and beautiful flowers. On the same lake is a felucca, also Chinese, in the figure of a two-headed dragon.

On the opposite side of this pavilion, and in the same waters, stands a Greek-style pavilion, of the sort called *monopteros*, perfectly executed, with ten columns of dark green marble with white veins, the capitals and bases in white marble and Ionic order, and the architraves and plinths in San Pablo stone from the mountains of Toledo and Consuegra. It is topped by a dome painted in oils [by Juan Duque, in 1793] on the inside, and on top by a dragon cast in lead and gilded. Between the columns, by order of the King, were placed eight statues [lost] in black marble, which they call *vig-gio*, and carved to stand together or in niches: they represent false deities or idols of the ancient Egyptians; they are works of their time, of great rarity and esteem, which corresponded to the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden. The entrance to this object of architectural taste is by a flat stone bridge."

As regards the fountains we can contemplate today in the Jardín del Príncipe, from which came, amongst others, the Fuente de Ceres we have already seen in the Parterre del Palacio, the most outstanding are the ones of Narcissus and Apollo. The first is the work of Joaquín

Dumandré, the son of Hubert Dumandré who played such a prominent part in the fountains at La Granja, its present appearance being slightly different from the original, which, it seems, was simpler, with just the figure of Narcissus standing on a rock, looking at his reflection in the water. Damaged, it is said, during the Napoleonic invasion, it had to be restored, a process directed by the palace architect Don Isidro Velázquez, who, as Villanueva's assistant, had for long been engaged in works and projects in Aranjuez. To Velázquez we owe some careful designs made later and signed between 1831 and 1837, which show the recomposition carried out during the reign of Ferdinand VII on this and other fountains which are or were to be found in the Jardín del Príncipe, or others like the Venus fountain, in the Plaza de San Antonio, which was almost completely rebuilt. On the Narcissus fountain, Velázquez must have added the elevated pedestal flanked by four *telamones* supporting a basin above them, on which appears the fountain's figure. With the Apollo fountain the case is somewhat similar. Located at the end of the avenue of the same name from one of the monumental entrances, of less consideration and interest than the ones mentioned as definitely by Villanueva in the Calle de la Reina, the architect Velázquez reinforced the fountain's presence by adding a colonnade at the back. The ground plan and elevation are accompanied by manuscript notes by Velázquez in which can be read: "New invention, and design to conclude the fountain named after Apollo which can be found started in the Gardens of the Royal Town of Aranjuez". The concept of the fountain responds to a clear romantic criterion, where the play of the water and jets reveals a new sensitivity, the fountain of the god being attributed to Esteban de Ágreda.

Other fountains, such as that of Neptune and that of the Swan, complete this short tour of different corners of the Jardín del Príncipe, whose nature and artifice were masterfully captured by painters like Brambilla and Santiago Rusiñol, the first with photographic realism and the second with impressionist sketchiness.

CASA DEL LABRADOR

There can be no doubt that the Casa del Labrador is the most outstanding piece of architecture in the Jardín del Príncipe, which must not mislead us into belittling the other buildings there, from the five delicate pavilions by the Embarcadero to the picturesque little sentry post close by overlooking the Tagus, which was originally an artillery emplacement. However, despite its modest outer appearance, the Casa del Labrador is among the most outstanding architectural caprices produced in Europe around the year 1800. There are many aspects to it: the materials and techniques used in its design, and the sculptures, paintings and decorative arts present there reach such a degree of harmony and beauty that they outshine the interiors of the Royal Palace itself.

There is no general agreement on the history of this building or on how it got its name. Its epithet, Casa del Labrador (ploughman's house), could be in line with a taste for the folksy in the Court: other eighteenth century Royal Residences and gardens have their Fishermen's, Smugglers', Old Woman's, Hermit's, Cow's and Rustic Houses, and many more besides, all in the Romantic-picturesque line of Versailles' *Petit hameau*; here, however, in the Jardín del Príncipe, the Casa del Labrador differs greatly from these others, in so far as it is so immensely refined, displaying nothing vulgar nor folksy. In fact, its various interiors are the apogee of a century of courtly art, where taste and power come together to reach heights of beauty surpassed nowhere, representing the last word in the absolute monarchy.

The names of Juan de Villanueva and Isidro Velázquez are mentioned in connection with the Casa del Labrador (which could easily have got its name from a pre-existing farm shed), with a very brief look in by Antonio López Aguado. It is difficult to ascertain just what each contributed, or exactly when the building was raised. We can be certain that Juan de Villanueva was commissioned by Charles IV to begin the job early in his reign, and that Isidro Velázquez finished it shortly before Napoleon's troops arrived. The latter architect signed a well-known drawing in 1803 showing the façade as we know it, with the following inscription: "designed and invented by Isidro Velázquez". Many years ago now, I had occasion to publish two wash drawings done by the same Velázquez, now belonging to a private collection, showing two views of the Casa del Labrador as it was in 1798, which leave no room for doubt about the architect's important role in the building. These drawings become even more interesting when we note that they show the main body of the building with its present size and height, but lacking the two accompanying wings that now house the Galería de Estatuas and the Gabinete de Platino. In their place, we see modest rustic structures combining poorly with the central section, which early on disappeared to be replaced by the present wings, which differ substantially from one another in structure and size, and may derive from these earlier annexes.

All of this leads us to feel that the building was raised in two stages, and that when the central body had been finished around 1798 – a date that fits in with the ceiling

of the Salón de Baile, signed by Maella in 1792 – the decision was made to add the two porticoed wings for the Azara collection of sculptures and the Gabinete de Platino, a gift from Napoleon to Charles IV. These two wings were built around 1803, to plans by Isidro Velázquez who also drew the “design for the restoration of the main façade’s decoration” in order to bring it into line with the style of Velázquez’s structures, which show a definite Romantic touch absent from Villanueva’s rigorous Neo-classicism.

The Casa del Labrador is divided into three horizontal bands: the ground floor, which externally has window openings in a granite body, broken in a horizontal direction only, one of Isidro Velázquez’s hallmarks; the first floor is of brick, with balconies alternating with niches for statues; and finally, an attic section with small windows that combine with decorative reliefs of garlands and little angels, originally in plaster, but now of stone. The main front looks out over the courtyard formed by the two wings already mentioned, and one notes a strange feeling on seeing that there is no entrance here, and that where it should be in the centre of the façade, is a fountain and an allegory of Envy sculpted by Hercole de Ferrata in Carrara marble. This, and the Roman busts set on the portico terraces, came from the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden.

Immediately above on this same axis, we find a group sculpture by Arali called *Roman Charity*, a cartouche with Charles IV’s name and the date, 1803; and above the cornice, the Royal arms. The first floor’s greater importance is stressed on the façade by the presence of a rich collection of sculptures on allegorical, mythological and Classical themes such as *Agriculture*, *Bacchus*, *Hercules*, *Ceres*, *Apollo and Diana the hunter*, *Orpheus*, *Phoebes with the snake*, a *Roman matron* and a *Roman priestess*, among others.

Although the most important rooms are on this same first floor, several rooms on the ground floor and in the attic also have interesting paintings and sculptures, as well as Italian, French and Spanish furniture dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dating from

the days of Philip V, the busts of Mars and Minerva in the vestibule are fine examples of this. From this vestibule, the main staircase leads to the first floor and the attic. This staircase is located in an unusual location in relation to the building, and is curiously composed of two semi-circular sections; interrupted by the first-floor landing, it then continues to the top storey. The staircase is a very delicate piece of architecture, with several richly-decorated free-standing Corinthian columns on the landing, whose red Cabra marble shafts with white bands contrast with the pure white Carrara marble capitals. The rooms on this floor are reached through a door with portraits of Charles IV and Queen Maria over the lintel.

While each is unique, the whole provides a rich display of furniture and decoration in the Imperial style, so typical of the reign of Charles IV. A strong French influence is noted, to the point that we owe rooms such as the Gabinete de Platino to Napoleon Bonaparte’s own architects and decorators, who in the persons of Percier and Fontaine defined the Imperial style from Paris, the Napoleon style that was all the rage throughout Europe prior to the Congress of Vienna. Dugourc, the man who decorated so many interiors for the little houses in El Pardo and El Escorial is yet another name, and one that we owe many nooks in the Casa del Labrador to.

The first room we come to when we leave the stairwell is the Sala de Apolo, known thus for the painting on its ceiling, with *Apollo and the Muses in Parnassus* at its centre; it was painted by Zacarías González Velázquez, the brother of the building’s architect. This room acts as a hall-way, with the Saleta de la Reina the Galería de las Estatuas and the Salón de Billar being the most important to one side, and the Comedor, the Salón de Baile, antechambers to the Tocador and the Servicio, Gabinete de Platino and Sala de Música on the other, the asymmetry in numbers being due to the rooms varying in size.

A well-appointed antechamber, sometimes known as the Salón de Carlos III from the subject-matter of Juan Duque’s painting on the ceiling, leads from the Sala de

Apolo to the Saleta de la Reina, whose ceiling was painted by the same artist. But the most attractive thing about this sitting room, completely decorated in the Pompeii style, is the excellent tapestries covering the walls, produced by chamber embroiderer Juan López Robredo. It is said that Queen Maria Luisa herself actually worked on them.

The Galería de las Estatuas was designed as a space where José Nicolás de Azara's collection of sculptures, brought from Italy, could be placed in an orderly manner. Among the most outstanding pieces are busts of Greek writers and philosophers; among them are said to number Epicure, Theophrastus, Herodotus and Sophocles. The Gallery is in a lovely Neo-classical style, using marble and plasterwork only, below a vaulted ceiling painted by Zacarías González Velázquez. There are a variety of themes, including Day and Night, and Agriculture. The capricious clock, made by the Boussiers in 1850, is particularly interesting in this context; the basic idea is that of a fountain, and it uses a series of Classical motifs below a free version of Rome's Trajan column. This Gallery communicates with the Salón de Billar, whose billiard table and cue, a genuine work of art in wood with costly wooden and precious metal inlays, were presented to Fernando VII by Manuel Marín. Nonetheless, it is the ceiling painted by Salvador Maella with the Four Elements (Air, Earth, Fire and Water) and the silk tapestried walls which give the room its very special character. Among the decorative motifs depicted in silk thread are the centrepieces showing views of Aranjuez, Madrid and other Royal Residences, as though they were paintings. In this salon, the time is marked by a richly-ornamented clock dating from 1804, made by Charles IV's clockmaker, Manuel Rivas.

The Salón de Baile and Comedor are the two largest rooms in Casa del Labrador. In the past, Queen Maria Luisa used the latter as her parlour. It is embellished with an extraordinary work of tapestry in silk and gold, where we are once again shown a series of landscapes including Aranjuez, El Escorial and several Ital-

ian scenes. These motifs are contained within a pattern of lozenges covering the walls from the skirting-board to the vaulted ceiling. This last, painted by Manuel Salvador Maella in 1798, shows the Four Seasons. The Salón de Baile next door also has a marvellous ceiling, begun by Bayeu and finished by Maella in 1792, with scenes from the Four Parts of the World (Europe, Africa, America and Asia). Among the most beautiful decorations are the two wonderful Mont Cenis lamps providing artificial light, the four large Sèvres vases in the corners; the clock-bureau in mahogany and bronze in Louis XIV style; and the table in bronze and malachite in the centre of the room, a gift from Tsar Alexander III to Isabel II. The chamber's outstanding furniture and fittings are completed by the chimney-breasts, consoles and seats.

A series of rooms following on from one another lead to the Tocador y Servicio at the end of this wing, next to the Salón de Baile. Here again, this unique room is decorated with Pompeiian subject-matter. It contains the Royal Toilet, shaped as a throne. The various colours and qualities of the marble floor are centred on a head within a geometrical design of eight-pointed stars with bunches of grapes. Next comes the famous Gabinete de Platino mentioned above, the work of French architects Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, the epitome of the Imperial Style in decoration. The original design became known throughout Europe thanks to the publication in 1801 of the *Recueil de décorations intérieures, comprenant tout ce qui a rapport à l'ammeublement*. This work, published in Paris in 1801, allows us to date the Aranjuez design, although it was some years before it actually came into existence. The exquisite overall design has always been admired here, as has the extraordinary richness of the materials employed, which, along with bronze and mahogany, include gold and platinum inlays, making the room more of a Royal Treasure than the metaphorical gem. A number of pictures by Girodet, showing all sorts of allegories, and Bidaut's and Chebeate's Italian

scenes, bring a touch of controlled colour to this surprising apartment, the last word in Royal caprices.

The Sala de Música, also known as the "Corina" from the Greek poetess atop the superb clock in the centre of the room, has a fine example of Japelli's decorative abilities on the ceiling, as well as Brambilla's views of the Royal Residence at la Granja.

Finally, crossing the Sala de la Yeguada, we reach the service stairway in a nook of the palace which is given lustre by the wall-paintings there. The Sala de la Yeguada owes its name to several scenes covering the chamber's four walls, painted by Zacarías González Velázquez. Here, there are no examples of interior architecture, nor Pompeiian references: just broad

panoramas with great depth. In effect, below the cloudscape painted on the ceiling, the room seems to be a glass box from which we can see the landscape of Aranjuez where Charles IV and Maria Luisa and their respective entourages enjoy themselves out hunting. A doorway at the end leads to the service staircase already mentioned. There is nothing particularly special about it, but Japelli's abilities and his make-believe views make it seem more spacious than it actually is. Accordingly, columns and non-existent spaces are painted, and several figures appear, producing a surprising effect that gives this service stairway a stateliness worthy of this little palace, the same stateliness apparent throughout the Casa del Labrador.